

Graduate Council Minutes
Talon Room, Building 16
September 14, 2017

Attendance: Lori Lange, Kate Mattingly Learch, Sophie Maxis, Betsy Nies, John Parmelee, Richard Patterson, Sarah Provost, Dawn Russell, David Schwam-Baird, Claudia Sealey-Potts, Sherry Shaw, Anne Swanson, Tulika Varma, Murat Tiryakioglu, Brenda Vose, Kristine Webb, Lauri Wright, Zhiping Yu, Wanda Lastrapes, Brian Armbruster, Tiffany Baffour, Amy Bishop, George Candler, Tom Caswell, Chau Kelly, Catherine Christie, James Churilla, Chad Learch, Roger Eggen, Matt Gilg, Liz Gregg, Gerard Hogan, David Hoppey, Rob Haley, Janice Seabrooks-Blackmore; David Jaeger; John Kantner, Megan Kuehner, Leah Carpenter.

Dr. Kantner called the meeting to order at 12:15 pm by welcoming the members of the Graduate Council and GPDs. He began his remarks by explaining a little about what the Graduate Council is and its functions. The council was created as a standing committee of the Faculty Association and operates on its behalf. The Graduate Council members are appointed and not elected. Each department is asked to send one person to represent them, but everyone is always welcome. Dr. Kantner continued by stating each meeting is the second Thursday of each month. This council is used as an advisory group for policies. The decision is not binding to the provost, but he does take it very seriously.

Dr. Kantner made introductions for Megan Kuehner as Director and Leah Carpenter as the new recruiting/outreach coordinator. He also pointed out that Peter Durr is the liaison for veterans and active duty students. At this time, everyone was asked to introduce themselves and the department they represent.

The first item of the agenda was an update on the Graduate School enrollment numbers. The FTE has been increasing since 2013. Additionally, the graduate student body has increased from 9% to 11%. The Graduate School target, set by Enrollment Services and Deans, has been increasing and we have reached these target numbers. One thing Dr. Kantner pointed out is we have a few programs that are not included in these numbers. As they are non-standard tuition programs, they do not count towards what we submit to the state. Most of these programs are in Brooks College of Health although one is in the College of Education and Human Services. Unfortunately, these programs, like DNP, are highly enrolled. Because of this we also look at headcount. This shows there is a much greater increase: up 34% since 2013. Our yield rate of 70% is also very high compared to industry standards. Dr. Kantner affirms that these are all positive numbers and we are heading in the right direction.

Dr. Kantner explained the increase in growth partly stems from the fact we are bringing more programs to the university. Some examples include Master of Science in Athletic Training, EdS in Educational Leadership, and the Master of Science in Higher Education. We have several more proposed programs that should be coming in the next several years. Master of Science in Materials Science in Engineering is a collaboration effort between several colleges. We are very willing to work with departments that are interested in this more complicated program that pulls several departments together. Accelerated Bachelors

to masters programs are also helping to increase numbers. Engineering has been doing this for a while. The Master of Public Administration has the undergraduate portion approved and the Graduate portion should be approved shortly. The English department is working on a Master of Arts in English accelerated program, as well. Dr. Kantner asked that if anyone is beginning to plan a program to let us know so we can help pull together a solid proposal. We know where fault lines are and can help navigate.

Next, Dr. Kantner mentioned that there could be changes in recruitment and outreach as new people come on board, but one thing we will continue to offer is the Graduate School campus visit. He explained the sign up process and that each tour is done on an individual personalized basis. We give a tour of the campus and arrange meetings with GPDs so students can get a good feel for the program. This seems to be yielding many applications, but at this point it is still unclear how many of those matriculate. He asked for any suggestions they think can improve this process.

Research Week is April 9-13, 2018. This will be a combined effort of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Grad School, and office of UG Research. This combination worked well last year so we will continue this year. The goal is to try to make opportunities for any programs interested to promote and advertise. Any research programs are invited as we are fairly liberal in what we mean by "research." We want it to be as open as possible to as many students as possible. The Graduate Student Research spotlight is the Friday of research week alongside the SOARS event. There is a competition for graduate students presenting during research week, and the best of the posters are sent to the statewide graduate research symposium. This year we sent a number of students. Dr. Kantner congratulated Kara Barker in History who placed first in her category. The Graduate Program Directors were asked to start thinking about students they might want to encourage in that direction so the students can start thinking about how to translate their theses into posters.

The next agenda item was about the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools and the awards it has to offer. There are two categories: generic master's thesis award which rotates between disciplinary categories each year. This year will be life sciences/social sciences which include Business and Education. The second award is the Innovative Application of Digital Technologies Scholarship in a Master's Thesis. The University of North Florida has not had anyone nominated for this latter award in the past. Dr. Kantner advised the GPD's that if they knew of any students from fall 2015 to summer 2017 who had a really solid thesis to let us know by November 1 in order to nominate them for one of these awards. The program director would need to write a letter nominating the student. Dr. Kantner would also write a letter and then submit the nomination.

The meeting now moved to a few discussion items on the agenda. Dr. Kantner wanted input on these now even though such a large group is in attendance as the items are more time sensitive. The first item for discussion is the Thesis/dissertation defense and submission deadline. This is something that has been evolving quickly over the past year. The problem is a few years ago the deadline was very early in the semester. It seemed unreasonable to ask students to have their theses/dissertations completed by the middle of their last

semester. The Graduate School was constantly being asked for exceptions and we were approving. The current thought is to push the deadline up to the very last minute and give no exceptions. The way it has been set up recently is the deadline to defend is one week prior to commencement. The deadline to submit the final version is one week after commencement. This gives time to make sure that everything is complete and certified prior to the Registrar's Office's deadline. Pushing it to the last minute would be taking a little bit of a risk albeit a student friendly one. It would take a little more diligence on the faculty side to make sure students know this is the true deadline. Dr. Kantner reports that we did not seem to have any problems in the last few semesters when we tried this new timeline.

Dr. Kantner opened it up to questions/concerns about moving the deadline.

Comment #1: Dr. Hoppey mentioned a situation they had during the summer semester where a student defended on the last day and had re-writes and edits to do. Being summer, a lot of faculty were out and unable to then sign off on the edits. He understands why we are wanting to change, but his concern is what we would do in situations where the student has edits to make. There isn't enough time for faculty to give feedback and sign off. A concern is that this situation created a little bit of a problem between the student and faculty. Will there be a different policy to follow for these situations?

Answer: Dr. Kantner stated that we have always had students fall into this category and not make the deadline. The answer is they have to wait and apply to graduate the next semester. The problem with that is they then have to register for credits that they don't necessarily need. Dr. Kantner indicated that these graduate school policies are created to be minimums. The department can choose to move the deadlines up internally, but must in the end meet the graduate school deadline. The main focus for the Graduate School is when the thesis/dissertation gets submitted to the Graduate School as we need time to process it and get it turned around and approved in time for Records' deadline. The key is to make students aware that it is a Records' deadline and there are no exceptions. He explained that what is set in the program guidelines is critical. The Graduate School sets the minimum standards and the program sets the higher expectation. As long as they are clear in the guidelines and students understand them then the Graduate School will defend them, as well. The hope is that if students are aware they have the entire semester and not just until the middle of the semester to complete their theses/dissertations then, arguably, they cannot be caught off guard. Dr. Kantner also mentioned that we can always change these deadlines. They are not hardcoded, but are more of an internal policy.

The second discussion item was concerning a program decision appeal policy. The issue is there is no process where students can appeal a program's decision. This especially pertains to suspensions/dismissals that are a result of the program's own rules. An example would be professional conduct. Students are guaranteed a right to appeal any sort of academic decision that's made that impacts their progress in a program. The academic

appeals policy is only for things related to a course. Students in the past have tried to route through the normal academic appeals process, but the system is not set up to handle it nor are the committees. The solution is to establish a second program appeal policy and create procedures that protect the faculty and the students. Any decision that is not course specific can go through this process. The thought is it will mirror the academic appeals process. The student would create their own case and it will be heard through the various levels of the program, then Chair, then Dean. The appeal has to be specific to expectations that have been laid out in the program guidelines that were violated by the student. Other appeals that are related to this like a grade appeal, medical withdrawal, or student conduct appeal would be taken care of first before this process is used. The hope is to get this on the books soon.

Comment: Dr. Kelly mentioned a scenario where the student suffered from mental health issues. He had to be suspended for professional conduct, but the issue was actually stemming from mental illness. It was very difficult and took a large amount of time and resources trying to get the student help. It was very difficult to decide what the protocol was for re-admitting the student. How can this proposal help with these situations?

Answer: Dr. Kantner did not think this policy is intended for that specific purpose. This is a way for students to have due process and appeal something that is clearly stated in the program guidelines. The above mentioned scenario is one that is tricky and may not have a clear answer due to the nature of the problem.

Comment #2: Tiffany Baffour raised a question about students who were not accepted and want to appeal the decision. To her knowledge there is no appeal process for this; she could not find anything in writing. Would this policy include these situations?

Answer: Dr. Kantner stated there's been an incorrect assumption by students that if they meet the GRE scores or GPA requirement they will be admitted. Fact of the matter is that the program has absolute discretion on who they admit. Some programs can only admit a certain number of people so even though many may qualify, not all can be accepted. As far including this in the new policy, we ultimately don't want an outside body being able to tell the program that they have to admit a certain student. Dr. Kantner will add this concern to the list to look into, but for the purpose of this policy it would not fall under it.

Comment #3: Dr. Hogan noted that their program guidelines specifically state that just because a student meets the guidelines does not guarantee admission to the program.

Dr. Kantner agreed, advising that the program guidelines be specific. He asked if everyone was in agreement with this policy update and there were no objections.

The last items on the agenda were future items. They were not discussed in this meeting, but Dr. Kantner wanted to make everyone aware that they were upcoming.

- GPA admissions requirement – Should we stick with the current 3.0 minimum GPA or is it time to update; students are marked as “exceptions” when admitted below 2.9 GPA. This 3.0 threshold was once set by the state, but is no longer. We are continually giving exceptions which could indicate this threshold is no longer a good one.
- Graduate certificate policy revisions – There is a mismatch between the policy for certificate credits and the policy for program credits. This complicates things for students who want to earn a certificate with a degree.
- Continuous enrollment for these/dissertations – Some programs require continuous enrollment some do not; the university as a whole does not. This is unusual as most universities require some sort of continuous enrollment that shows the students are still using resources/faculty to complete their theses/dissertations even if they are not officially enrolled.
- Thesis/Dissertation signature page – a lot of people are required to sign off on a thesis/dissertation and that does not help the timeline. All these people have to be found before students can officially submit their project. We would like to require that only the programs sign off to help expedite finishing.
- ProQuest/UMI submission of theses/dissertation – Should we start submitting these again? Not sure why we shouldn't.
- Commencement Hooding ceremony – Should we separate doctoral students from the overall commencement event? Many universities do them separately; it speeds up the event and would give more time to recognize the students. We were asked to review if this should be an option.
- Support for Graduate Student Organization – Brian Armbruster is here representing. How as a university can we enhance the status of the GSO and find ways to support it? We will continue to discuss in upcoming meetings.
- Other topics to address for 2017-2018 Council? - Email us if you think of anything else you feel needs to be discussed and we'll add to the agenda.

Dr. Kantner closed by asking if there were any questions or concerns. Lauri Wright asked if there was a way to offer more graduate scholarships as we aren't currently able to offer many. This is something we will put on the agenda for further discussion at a future meeting.